TONY P. HALL
THIRD DISTRICT, OHIO
COMMITTEES:
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RULES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RULES OF THE HOUSE
SELECT COMMITTEE ON HUNGER
CHAIRMAN, INTERNATIONAL TASK FORCE ON HUNGER

86-4 E

2448 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-6465

DISTRICT OFFICE:
501 FEDERAL BUILDING
200 WEST SECOND STREET
DAYTON, OH 45402
(513) 225-2843

TL 4122

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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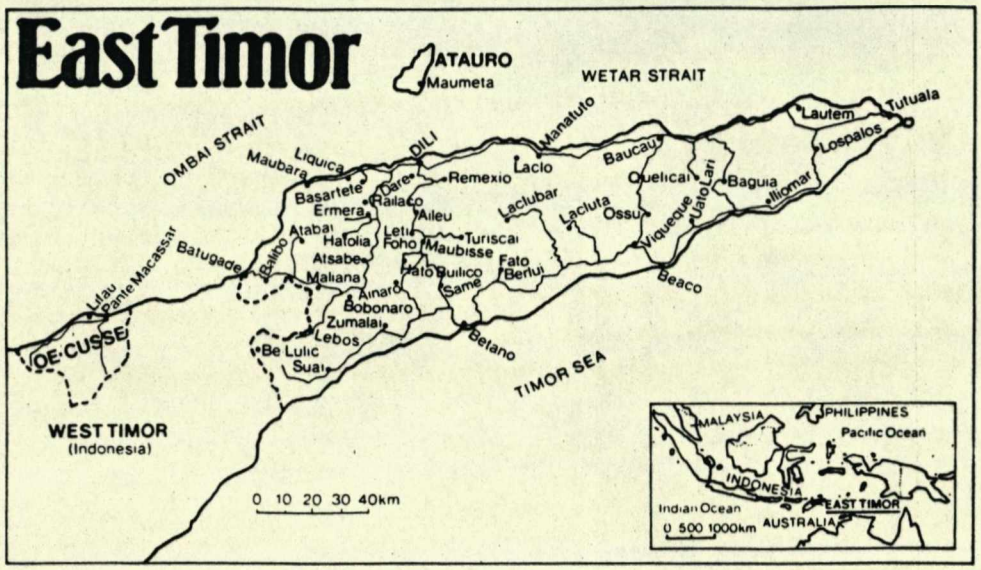
World ignores the hidden holocaust of East Timor



March 20, 1986

Dear Colleague:

I would like to invite you to cosign the letter on the back of this sheet to President Reagan regarding the tragedy that persists in East Timor, the largely Roman Catholic former Portuguese colony which was invaded and occupied by Indonesia in 1975.

President Reagan will be travelling to Indonesia during his trip to Asia in early May. This will be the first visit to Indonesia by an American President since President Ford was in the Indonesian capital in December, 1975 -- the eve of the invasion of East Timor.

The letter respectfully asks the President to discuss issues relating to East Timor in his meetings with Indonesian leaders. Specifically, the letter urges the President to encourage Indonesia to maintain and expand access to East Timor for international humanitarian agencies and to address current questions of basic human rights.

Concern over the East Timor situation was expressed by Secretary of State Shultz during a visit to Indonesia in July, 1984. That same month, Pope John Paul II also expressed deep concern about East Timor. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher also raised the Timor issue when she visited Jakarta in April, 1985. Further, in June, 1985, Amnesty International issued a detailed report on the human rights situation in East Timor, and has published additional information in recent months.

President Reagan's trip to Indonesia provides a special opportunity for the prestige and influence of the United States to be brought to bear on the East Timor tragedy. If you would like to cosign this letter and/or cosponsor the Timor resolution (H. Con. Res. 244), please contact Marty Rendon at 5-6465 by April 24, 1986.

~~Sincerely~~,

Tony P. Hall, M. C.

Dear Mr. President:

We continue to be deeply concerned about the human tragedy in East Timor, the predominantly Roman Catholic former Portuguese colony invaded by Indonesia in 1975. Since then, an estimated 100,000 East Timorese -- nearly one-sixth of East Timor's original population -- have perished from the combined effects of the Indonesian occupation. Armed conflict in the territory persists, as do reports of atrocities such as disappearances, summary executions, torture, and forced birth control.

Highly regarded international church sources confirm that serious human rights abuses continue. While there has been some ostensible improvement in access to East Timor by international humanitarian agencies, such access remains limited. Unrestricted access is critical in light of reports that malnutrition-related deaths of children persist in at least some areas.

We therefore respectfully urge you to give serious attention to the East Timor situation in meetings that you and the Presidential party will have with Indonesian leaders during your visit to Indonesia in May. As the first U. S. President to visit Indonesia since the December, 1975 invasion of East Timor, your interest could contribute significantly to efforts that might prevent further bloodshed and misery in East Timor.

Secretary of State Shultz deserves credit for raising the issue of human rights in East Timor during his July, 1984 visit to Jakarta; that same month, Pope John Paul II expressed deep concern over the suffering of the people of East Timor. Further, In April, 1985, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher raised humanitarian and human rights issues regarding East Timor during a visit to the Indonesian capital.

Continued fighting in the territory between the Indonesian military and the East Timorese resistance is reason for concern, coupled with persistent reports from Amnesty International and other organizations of human rights violations. Accounts of various pressures and intimidation directed at the Roman Catholic Church in East Timor by Indonesian authorities are most disturbing. Also troubling is the matter of political prisoners. While the official number of East Timorese political detainees has dropped, Amnesty International and others report that a significant number of detainees purportedly released have in fact been moved to less identifiable places of detention. There have been accounts of "hidden" prisons and detention camps to which international humanitarian groups still do not have access.

Further alarming is the news of a population limitation program introduced in East Timor by the Indonesians. Authoritative church sources say that this program is being carried out often without the consent or knowledge of the mostly rural population of East Timor. A program of this nature carried out by the invaders themselves has troubling implications, considering the huge death toll in East Timor since the invasion and the comparatively small original population. Mr. President, we ask you to urge the Indonesian government to put an end to population limitation measures and practices in East Timor that do not have the full consent and knowledge of those directly concerned.

We seek efforts to ensure the continuation and expansion of access to East Timor by international humanitarian agencies, with guarantees of freedom of movement for these agencies so that the full range of their activities may be carried out to the greatest possible extent. In particular, all prisoners and detainees should be assured timely visitation. In addition, we strongly believe that the Roman Catholic Church in East Timor should be guaranteed an existence free from official pressure and intimidation. Finally, the United States should encourage efforts to bring about a fair and peaceful settlement of the East Timor conflict.

We fully appreciate the importance of friendly relations with Indonesia. We are also aware that there will be many other issues on your agenda when you travel to Bali. However, we respectfully ask you to add the plight of the people of East Timor to your agenda. You have a special opportunity to bring to bear on the Timor tragedy the prestige and moral influence of the United States.